



Executive Summary



**What works in tackling
child abuse and neglect?**

A manual for policy makers, managers & professionals



Introduction

This manual is the main outcome of the Daphne project “Prevent and Combat Child Abuse: What works? An overview of regional approaches, exchange and research partners”. The partnership of the project included the Netherlands Youth Institute (coordination), CESIS (Portugal), the Family Child Youth Association (Hungary); The German Youth Institute (Germany), Orebro regional council (Sweden) and the Verwey-Jonker Institute (the Netherlands).

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This executive summary is part of the manual of what works in tackling child abuse and neglect. The full version of this text can be found at <http://www.youthpolicy.nl/yp/Youth-Policy/Youth-Policy-subjects/Youth-policy-Youth-Policy-Child-abuse/International-project-Daphne>

This project has been funded by the Daphne III programme of the European Union. The Daphne III programme aims to contribute to the protection of children, young people and women against all forms of violence and attain a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion. Its specific objective is to contribute to the prevention of, and the fight against all forms of violence occurring in the public or the private domain, including sexual exploitation and trafficking of human beings. It aims to take preventive measures and provide support and protection for victims and groups at risk.

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The Daphne project *Prevent and Combat Child Abuse: What works? An overview of regional approaches, exchange and research* aimed to bring together knowledge and practice on what works in the full range of tackling child abuse. This project was funded by the European Commission. It was coordinated by the Netherlands Youth Institute and carried out in collaboration with the Swedish Orebro regional council, the Hungarian Family child Youth Association, the German Youth Institute, CESIS from Portugal and the Verweij-Jonker Institute from The Netherlands.

In workstream 1 the participating countries shared their knowledge from research. This resulted in five national reports and one comprehensive report about strategies, measurements and management of tackling the whole range of child abuse and neglect, from prevention to treatment. These reports can be downloaded from the English pages of the website of the Netherlands Youth Institute (www.youthpolicy.nl)

In workstream 2 we collected practice-based knowledge on tackling abuse and neglect in all five countries. Coordinated by the Verwey-Jonker Institute from the Netherlands, a study was carried by various project partners out among parents and professionals – based on a limited sample – in Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and The Netherlands.

We have used the knowledge collected in these two workstreams, together with currently available evidence based knowledge on tackling child abuse and neglect, to outline this manual. The foundation of the manual is article 19 of the Convention of the

Rights of the Child, in particular the related *General Comment 13: the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence*¹. Not only does this General Comment apply to all countries and parties involved, it also outlines a coherent and effective framework for research, policy and practice. But like most international recommendations and standards, it is very general and we hope that this manual *What works in tackling child abuse and neglect?* can contribute to making a next step towards its implementation.

After comparing the ideal situation represented by the General Comment with the evidence and practice-based knowledge regarding the quality of the systems, services and professionals, we have formulated specific conclusions and recommendations regarding the various steps in the care continuum around child abuse:

- Universal and targeted prevention;
- Detecting, reporting and stopping child abuse;
- Treatment and out-of-home placement.

Additional conclusions and recommendations focus on integrated working in relation to tackling child abuse and neglect. Many of these recommendations have been made before. We are aware of this. But we also realise that some messages have to be repeated over and over again, before they become reality. Therefore, this summary begins with some general conclusions and recommendations towards ensuring the best possible outcomes for children. Both general and specific conclusions and recommendations are based on the two-year collaboration in this project with five countries and six partners, representing different levels of research, policy and practice.

¹ In 2011, the Committee of the Rights of the Child adopted *General Comment 13 on Article 19 of the Convention of the Right of the Child: The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence*. This General Comment provides guidelines for the implementation of article 19 on the Convention of the Right that expresses that all children should be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. The General Comment also outlines the legislative, administrative, social and educational measures of state parties to protect the child from all these forms of violence.



Overall conclusions and recommendations

A sustainable care continuum for preventing and treating child abuse and neglect, embedded in a national framework

By ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, all European countries have committed themselves to protecting children from abuse and neglect. We have seen in our project that the countries involved have taken many of the necessary steps towards creating the conditions to ensure such protection. All countries involved in the project have introduced legal bans on corporal punishment and/or issued governmental strategies regarding universal and targeted prevention of child abuse as well as parenting support. Child abuse and neglect thus have been part of the (national) political agenda at some point.

In General Comment 13 the Committee of the Rights of the Child recommends developing a national coordinating framework:

“This coordinating framework can provide a common frame of reference and a mechanism for communication among Government ministries and also for State and civil society actors at all levels with regard to needed measures, across the range of measures and at each stage of intervention identified in article 19.”

However, realising such a framework and keeping it on the agenda is a complex process. It requires on-going awareness, a sense of urgency and a long term approach. We are concerned that the current economic crisis will not only have a negative impact on keeping preventing and combating child abuse on the agenda, but will also increase the occurrence of child abuse and neglect.

In this manual, we have introduced the notion of a care continuum of preventing and treating child abuse and neglect. We have written our reports

on strategies, measurements and management of tackling child abuse and neglect in the full range, from prevention to treatment, as a continuing process. In this manual we have described the various elements of this circle:

- Universal and targeted prevention;
- Detecting, reporting and stopping child abuse;
- Treatment and out-of-home placement.

Over the last years many reports and recommendations have dealt more specifically with some of these elements, but we have chosen to focus on the full range. General Comment 13 introduces the various elements that should be part of a coordinating framework. Many of these elements are reflected in our recommendations. But we think that such frameworks should be based on a model of care continuum. The most effective way to fight child abuse is to prevent it from happening. In the manual we give many examples of this from our countries and from what we have learned from research.

However, no matter how well our preventive programmes and services may work, it will be evident that child abuse will still happen. For these cases we need to also invest in the other end of the continuum and ensure that the most effective treatment is available for children, parents and families. Effectively dealing with child abuse thus requires a coordinated and effective approach on all parts of the continuum.

Implementation of effective policies and services founded on practice and evidence-based knowledge

General Comment 13 lists all measures that are necessary to prevent and combat child abuse and neglect within a strong national framework. These measures range from the very beginning of prevention – changing societal attitudes towards

abuse and neglect of children – to evidence-based treatment and interventions. In our manual we underline that singular actions do not make a difference. Coherent and integrated policies and services should be in place and implemented throughout the care continuum.

An important measure for the protection of children that many countries, including Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and The Netherlands have realized is a legal ban on corporal punishment. However, evidence as well as practice-based knowledge – especially from Hungary and Sweden – show us that prohibiting corporal punishment by law alone is not enough.

Legislation needs to be accompanied by intensive and long-term information campaigns in order to have a considerable impact on behaviour and attitudes concerning violence. General Comment 13 on Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well the available evidence and practice-based knowledge, show that awareness campaigns are important measures to promote respectful child-rearing free from violence. However, more research is needed to identify what makes such campaigns effective.

What we did notice in our project is that all our countries have outlined policies and practices regarding prevention and treatment and have many measures in place. However, there is clearly a large variation in the quantity and quality of both policies and practices. What is lacking in all countries is a systematic approach to the implementation of policy and practice.

The simple circular approach of *Plan, Do, Check, Act* (the so-called PDCA-cycle) is hardly used in a sustainable way in policies and services. At all levels on-going threats can be distinguished that prevent the necessary continuation and systematic

implementation. This ranges from other burning issues pushing violence against children from the political agenda, budget cuts for services due to financial crisis, and changes in management and professionals leading to shifts in priorities.

In the implementation of evidence and practice-based knowledge we should pay extra attention to the professionals working with children and young people. The General Comment states that *“all who come in contact with children are aware of risk factors and indicators of all forms of violence, have received guidance on how to interpret such indicators, and have the necessary knowledge, willingness and ability to take appropriate action.”*

This requires good initial education as well as continuous training of professionals working with children, parents and families. One of the main issues affecting professionals is the balance between:

- *Underreporting* (letting the fragile relationship with the parents prevail and not always putting the risk for the child first)
- and *Overreporting* (which can be caused by their obligation to report and a fear for the consequences if they don't do so).

This will be an on-going issue for most professionals and therefore support structures and supervision for professionals should be obligatory. In the end, the professionals are the ones who have to make the difference, not the systems. We should also develop systems for accountability that stimulate reflection and improvement instead of blaming and shaming.

Ensuring and implementing integrated working

We have already underlined the need for national coordinating frameworks as mentioned in General Comment 13. Such frameworks are the first step towards incorporating provisions of comprehensive and integrated measures. They create unity in policies and legal measures. But frameworks are not enough.

Practice-based knowledge from our research shows that there are already many good examples of integrated tools and services for tackling child abuse and neglect in various countries, of which the effects and outcomes can be placed somewhere on the care continuum. These examples – for instance the *family centres* that currently exist in various countries including Germany, Sweden and The Netherlands – could play an important role in the prevention of abuse and neglect. Tools and instruments for reporting, documenting and assessing abuse and neglect help professionals to detect possible abuse situations earlier and quicker and help to develop a common language among practitioners. Also *one-stop-shop* services for reporting and treating child abuse such as the *Children's Houses* in Sweden help to make professionals work together.

Countries have varying child welfare systems and legislation, which makes it virtually impossible to directly transfer effective tools or services. But one thing we can do is to describe various good examples of integrated tools and services and try to capture what makes them work. Our practice-based evidence, based on a limited number of interviews with parents and professionals does demonstrate that integrated working and bringing services together is challenging for professionals, but more fruitful in the end. It is clearly working better for parents, as they have to tell their story only a limited number of times. However, more practice and evidence-based knowledge is required to determine whether the currently available integrated tools and services are also effective in realizing the best outcomes for children and whether they are cost-effective.

Policy and practice should be based on the empowerment and participation of children and parents

One of the most striking outcomes of our interviews with parents is the lack of trust and how disrupting this is for the care process. This comes as no surprise, since it is backed up by research and also reflected in the negative attitude that parents show towards care agencies in many countries: “*they are only coming to take my children away*”. It is also clear that many parents feel they have to tell the story over and over again to a series of care agencies, which could be overcome if services are better integrated and work together.

But this is not enough. We often read in policy papers that services should be more *client friendly* and *family-centred*. Taking into account the wider social context of parents, children and families as this will have an effect on the possibilities for intervention, we should study more carefully what this really entails. Are we talking about empowerment and participation, focusing on strengths rather than on problems? Are we making enough use of the informal support systems of families and children, do professionals have the right tools for supporting these processes?

It is clear that the effect and outcome of our policies, preventive measures, interventions and treatment can only be improved if they meet the needs of parents and children. We clearly need to put more emphasis on the empowerment and participation of parents and children. We all agree – which is reflected in policy and action plans – that children and parents should be at the heart of our services. But looking at the feedback from parents in often very vulnerable situations it becomes apparent that we are not very successful in doing so.

Preventing and combating child abuse has clearly become part of the policy agendas and services in the countries that participated in this study, but there still is a lot of work to do to ensure that children and their parents are indeed put at the heart of this process.

Universal and targeted prevention

Looking at the Convention of the Rights of the Child, General Comment 13 as well as the available evidence and practice knowledge about the quality of systems, services, interventions and professionals regarding the prevention of child abuse and neglect, we can draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

There is a strong need to keep tackling child abuse and neglect high on the political agenda

By ratifying the Convention of the Rights of the Child, all European countries have committed themselves to the protection of children from abuse and neglect. All the countries that participate in this Daphne project have introduced a legal ban on corporal punishment and issued governmental prevention strategies. Many of them also have strategies about the universal and targeted prevention of child abuse and neglect and/or well parenting support strategies.

Governments need to be aware that implementing these strategies and consequently tackling child abuse is a complex process of serious change. It entails taking measures across all stages of intervention. Such a process requires constant awareness, a sense of urgency and a long term approach. There are concerns that the current economic crisis conflicts with such a long term approach. It is therefore paramount to keep tackling child abuse and neglect high on the political agenda.

There is a need for adequate implementation of legislation prohibiting child abuse and neglect

As mentioned earlier, prohibiting corporal punishment by law alone is not enough. Legislation needs to be accompanied by intensive and long-term information campaigns in order to have a considerable impact on behaviour and attitudes concerning violence.

The implementation of legislation must also involve the education and training of all professionals working with and for children, parents and families. These professionals must be taught a child rights' based approach addressing attitudes, traditions, customs and behavioural practices that tolerate and promote violence against children.

We need to keep in mind that implementation of legislation and other measures, including the introduction of new services and interventions and realizing change among professionals, take time. In particular, there are different phases in the implementation process at the operational level. People, even professionals, also need time to embrace new measures and will need varied implementation strategies. More research is needed to demonstrate the effects of applying such 'implementation knowledge' to tackling child abuse and neglect.

Governments should invest in progressive universalism

Foremost from an ethical stand, but also from a financial point of view, governments should invest in the prevention of child abuse and neglect. Effective prevention can only be achieved through progressive universalism. It does not just take universal services and interventions for all families. Government should also invest in targeted services and interventions for families that live under an increased risk of child abuse and neglect and who are in need of further support. Evidence shows that, in families with a high risk of child endangerment, targeted prevention is only effective when it is needs-oriented, extensive, and intensive and delivered over a longer period.

Despite the current economic crisis, it is always important for governments to tackle poverty and ensure good upbringing and future prospects for children. Poor living conditions, such as poverty, can increase the risk of child endangerment, especially in combination with several serious risk factors. In practice, the emphasis on poverty as a risk for child abuse could be critical if professionals hastily and wrongly assume that all poor families have child-rearing problems.

Avoiding this kind of stigmatization is an important argument for investing in universal services for all families. In order to reach these families, services need to be culturally sensitive as well as comprehensive. This can be realized by involving professionals from different sectors, especially health and (early childhood) education, as well as providers of various kinds of parenting support. These services should serve as a point of entry for targeted services for families in need for intensive support.

Governments should invest in these universal and targeted services with proven effectiveness. Universally accessible parenting programmes as well as mass media public education programmes are effective approaches for preventing child abuse. In addition, effective targeted preventive programmes support parents and teach them positive parenting skills, such as home visits and parenting education.

Preventive services for child abuse and neglect should be offered as early as possible

There is a wide range of universal and targeted preventive services and interventions, including effective programmes. The project results show the need to offer preventive services for child abuse and neglect as early as possible.

Programmes providing and encouraging women to seek proper prenatal and postnatal care show promise in preventing the maltreatment of infants aged 0–3 years. In addition, parenting information offered during pregnancy and immediately after the child's birth can increase parents' understanding of parenting, children's needs and rights. Furthermore, information sessions in early childhood education and care or school have a demonstrated effect on children's knowledge on sexual abuse and self-protection and on the percentage of children disclosing experiences of sexual abuse.

Governments always need to be aware of these benefits of offering preventive services at an early stage. This is particularly true now. During times of economic crisis, governments often tend to cut the funding for preventive services. This could result in a higher demand for more expensive targeted services.

Detecting, reporting and stopping child abuse and neglect

Looking at the Convention of the Rights of the Child, General Comment 13, as well as the available evidence and practice knowledge about the quality of systems, services, interventions and professionals regarding detecting, reporting and stopping child abuse and neglect, we can draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

Ensure that all professionals working with children play a role in detecting child abuse

In Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and The Netherlands there is a wide range of (universal and/or targeted) preventive services. These include health care services for expecting mothers, children and young people, various kinds of parenting support, and early childhood education and care. However, not all countries allow the professionals working in these services an explicit role or duty in detecting child abuse and neglect and/or train them to do so. This also applies to schools and the professionals working there. There also seems to be a gap between the current and ideal situation when it comes to detecting and reporting child abuse and neglect by professionals. Ideally – according to the General Comment – professionals are able to detect all kinds of abuse. However, in practice not all kinds of child abuse are deemed equally damaging; neglect is less often considered harmful than physical abuse. In addition, it is difficult for professionals to raise the issue of child abuse with parents; they are often afraid of how parents will respond to the accusations of (suspicions of) child abuse.

There are several ways to ensure that *all professionals* working with children will play a role in detecting child abuse. This includes training to make them aware of the key signals and symptoms to look for in children, young people and in parents indicating the likelihood of different kinds of abuse.

In addition, *professionals in specific sectors* need to be made aware of specific risk factors for and/or key signs and symptoms for the groups of children that they are working with. Furthermore, professionals in all sectors also need to know which steps to take as a professional, whether alone or in conjunction with others, including where to report their suspicions.

Valid screening instruments for risks of child abuse and neglect can be used to identify parents who are in need of assistance. In practice, the use of such instruments should always be backed up by training and evidence-based guidelines.

Adequate reporting mechanisms need to be properly implemented within organisations and in the continuum of care for tackling child abuse and neglect

Evidence and practice-based knowledge demonstrate both overreporting and underreporting of child abuse and neglect. Both phenomena are equally detrimental to children, parents and families; they prevent them from receiving the help and support they need.

There are various reasons for not reporting. Practice-based knowledge shows us that the main reason for not reporting is fear among professionals. This includes their fear of perpetrators as well as the fear of becoming involved with the justice system. Professionals are primarily afraid of damaging the confidential relationship with the family, especially when the reports concern sexual abuse.

Evidence-based reasons for not reporting include the lack of awareness of the signs of child maltreatment or lack of knowledge of the reporting processes. Not reporting may also result from a perception that reporting might do more harm than

good. The lack of accountability of professionals may also lead to underreporting.

Implementing legal accountability alone however is not sufficient. Rather, adequate reporting mechanisms need to be properly implemented within organisations working with children, parents and families. This requires intervision and supervision to back up the decisions of individual professionals who do decide to report. In addition, these decision making processes should be qualified by means of guidelines, protocols and training. Training of professionals needs to address their possible *reporting fears* as well as their (legal) reporting obligations and information about where to make these reports.

Reporting should however not be a goal in itself. It is only one of the necessary measures in the continuum of care regarding the tackling of child abuse ranging from prevention to treatment.

Various measures should facilitate the general public and people close to children to talk to parents about signs of child abuse and neglect and report this

There are various bottlenecks for the general public and people close to children when it comes to reporting and talking to parents about signs of child abuse and neglect. This requires the implementation of various measures, such as awareness raising campaigns.

In many countries the reporting obligations for professionals do not apply to the general public. However, in various countries the general public is encouraged to make reports. It is also difficult for people close to children (such as neighbours or sport coaches) – and for professionals- to raise the issue of signs of child abuse with parents; they are often afraid of how parents will respond to the accusations of (suspicions of) child abuse.

Measures- such as training- are needed to teach people close to children how to talk with parents about signs of child abuse. In addition, awareness raising campaigns can facilitate the reporting of child abuse and neglect by the general public and

people close to children (and to professionals). Such campaigns can make them aware of their possible reporting obligations and where to report child abuse and neglect.

Investigation and assessment procedures need to be more child and family friendly

Once reports of child abuse have been made, these reports need to be investigated and risk assessments need to be made. The available evidence and practice-based knowledge show that at the moment there are many bottlenecks when it comes to such investigations and assessments.

Investigations can disrupt family life and in case of mandatory reporting result in a low number of substantiated cases of child abuse. The latter may indicate a lack of sufficient evidence, a failure of the family to cooperate, a lack of commitment to comply with services, or an inability to investigate because of staff shortage.

Practice-based knowledge shows it can be problematic if local public organisations have to investigate child abuse and neglect and at the same time provide services, support and treatment. This dual role may cause parents to refrain from looking for help because they fear an assessment by these organisations. This dual role could result in a lack of services, support and treatment.

In our study, both professionals and parents also expressed a lack of transparency in the assessment process. The lack of information and problems in communication lead parents to fear that their children will be taken away. Professionals also consider the processes before and after assessment to be too long. This not only refers to the process between detection and assessment, but also the process between investigation and providing services.

There is a great need for investigation and assessment procedures to be more child and family friendly. This requires speeding up the assessment processes as well as the processes before and after assessment. It also entails complete transparency about the investigation and assessment procedures. Most importantly, it requires that child safety remain the number one priority during these processes.



Treatment and out-of-home placement

Looking at the Convention of the Rights of the Child, General Comment 13, as well as the available evidence and practice knowledge about the quality of systems, services, interventions and professionals regarding treatment and out-of-home placement, we can draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

Countries should ensure that services for victims and perpetrators of child abuse and neglect are available and accessible

The available practice-based knowledge shows us that in Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and The Netherlands various kinds of services are available for victims of child abuse and neglect as well as for perpetrators. However, not all necessary services are always available or accessible.

In all countries but Hungary and Portugal, perpetrators have access to psychological or psychiatrist services. Furthermore, in Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands a restraining order can be imposed on perpetrators. Within the services for victims, a distinction can be made between services for children and services for families. In all countries, some forms of psychological or psychiatrist services are available for victimized children. Families can receive training programmes for developing (parenting) competences, structured treatment programmes and/or practical support. Various kinds of out-of-home placement are available for children and/or families.

However, when providing services not all countries work on the basis of the recommend systemic approach that focuses on family members living together as a system. There are also some bottlenecks regarding the availability and accessibility of the services in Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and the Netherlands. For

instance, a lack of specific treatment programmes for victims and perpetrators has been identified. There also is great variation in the quantity and quality of services available throughout the various countries. In addition, especially the German, Swedish and Hungarian respondents spoke a lot about the importance of accessibility and availability of services; services are physically not accessible or hard to reach because of waiting lists or time-consuming procedures.

In order for countries to live up to General Comment 13 which pleads for treatment services for victims and perpetrators of child abuse and neglect, countries should ensure that all services for children, parents and families are available and accessible.

Child safety should be the number one priority when offering treatment as well as out-of-home placement

During the entire process, from the time the report is made to the time the support services are terminated child safety must be the number one priority. This means first stopping child endangerment as soon as possible.

The focus on child safety also means putting the child first. Research shows that removing the child from the home may be beneficial for children who are victim of neglect, but only if certain conditions are realized. It requires placement stability and recruitment, coaching and counselling of foster families. Putting children first may also mean removing the perpetrator out of the home instead of the child.

Removing the perpetrator or the child from the home is only one part of the solution. Treatment must be offered to victims and perpetrators as well, particularly services and interventions that are

known to be effective. Depending on the type of problems the children experience, this could entail offering Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, play therapy or group therapy. Before children can return home, the abusive behaviour of parents needs to have changed. Relevant effective interventions to achieve this change include Incredible Years and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy.

❖ **Professionals should offer services for victims and perpetrators of child abuse and neglect in a client based, needs based and rights based manner**

Professionals should offer services for victims and perpetrators of child abuse and neglect in a client based, needs based and rights based manner.

Services and intervention should thus be chosen and designed on the basis of the needs of the children, parents and families, not according to institutional logic. In doing so, attention must be paid to the scientific knowledge about which interventions are effective and what makes them work. In the long run inadequate interventions are more expensive than more expensive but also more effective interventions.

The following characteristics needed in treatment have been identified in evidence and practice-based research:

- Interventions are based on a systemic approach involving at least parents and children;
- Families are offered practical support;
- The programme is tailored to the needs of the child and/or family;
- Parents and professionals both understand the goals;

❖ **Being a good professional is not only a matter of individual competences but also a matter of structural good working conditions**

Practice and evidence-based knowledge shows that respectful attitudes and creating trust are some of the important competences of professionals working with families of abused children. Professionals also need to be sensitive to feelings of shame.

Creating good working conditions for professionals can foster these necessary competences. Depending on the country, creating good working conditions could include improving the status of all or specific groups of professionals, creating lower case loads and/or offering education and higher salaries.



Integrated working

Looking at the Convention of the Rights of the Child, General Comment 13, as well as the available evidence and practice knowledge about the quality of systems, services, interventions and professionals regarding integrated working, we can draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

❖ **There is a need for national coordinating frameworks**

There is a strong need to keep tackling child abuse and neglect high on the political agenda. This can be facilitated by a national coordinating framework.

General Comment 13 outlines that a national coordinating framework incorporates the provision of comprehensive and integrated measures. This includes legislative, administrative, social as well as educational measures. To a greater or smaller extent, these measures are already present in the frameworks, strategies, actions, policies and/or programmes of Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and the Netherlands. However, all European countries should implement all these different measures and encourage integrated working by professionals from different sectors, such as the health, social services and/or educational sectors.

According to General Comment 13, a national coordinating framework also calls for the incorporation of measures across all stages of intervention. Such a comprehensive approach addresses all elements of the full circle of tackling child abuse and neglect: prevention; detecting, reporting and stopping; treatment and out-of-home placement. Evidence-based knowledge shows us that effectively tackling child abuse and neglect indeed requires a comprehensive approach that prevents and stops child abuse and treats its consequences. Practice-based knowledge shows us

that some of our Daphne project countries already have such an integrated approach. However, this needs to be realized in all participating countries as well as in all other European countries.

Our practice-based knowledge shows that a national coordinating framework could serve as a foundation for the activities of local or regional governments as they are usually responsible for the provision of (preventive) services and interventions to children, parents and families. As such the national coordinating frameworks will answer the call from professionals in our study for a (better)national governmental vision on the local preventive interventions within families.

❖ **Countries should implement integrated tools and services for tackling child abuse and neglect**

Practice-based knowledge shows that there are already many good practices using integrated tools and services for tackling child abuse and neglect in Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Sweden and the Netherlands. These good practices address one or more of the elements of the continuum of care for tackling child abuse and neglect. *Family centres* in Germany, Sweden or The Netherlands for example could play a role in prevention and/or detection. In contrast, *BBIC* is a Swedish system for handling and documenting investigations/ assessments, planning and follow-up of child protection. In addition, in a *Children's House* in Sweden various 'investigating' professionals work together.

All these integrated tools and services are often very child and family friendly as they prevent parents and children from having to tell their story over and over again. *BBIC* for example provides a structure for systematically obtaining data, documenting and following up children's and adolescents' needs for intervention. In addition, professionals consider

family centres and *Children's Houses* the preferred one-stop-shops. Such a one-stop-shop lowers the threshold for parents and children when asking for help as they no longer have to go from one location to the next to seek help or have to tell their story again and again.

Different countries have different child welfare systems and unique legislation. This makes it virtually impossible to directly transfer effective tools or services. One thing we can do – as we have done in this manual – is to describe various good practices, integrated tools and services, and try to capture what makes them work. Our practice-based evidence – based on a limited number of interviews with parents and professionals – has shown that integrated working and bringing services together may be challenging to professionals, but is more fruitful in the end. It clearly works better for parents, as they have to tell their story only a limited number of times. The services are very child and family friendly.

Other European countries should also implement such child and family friendly integrated tools and services for tackling child abuse and neglect.

Governments and organisations should create effective conditions for integrated working in relation to tackling child abuse

Evidence and practice-based knowledge show us that various conditions contribute to integrated work. While more research is needed to determine the extent to which these conditions also facilitate integrated working in relation to tackling child abuse and neglect, governments and organisations should create the conditions that are within their own scope of control.

As our practice-based knowledge shows, governments can realize various conditions for integrated work. This includes making funding available for integrated working or issue relevant legislation, such as legislation requiring integrated working by professionals involved in tackling child abuse and neglect.

Other conditions for integrated working are to be realized by organisations, if necessary with the support of national government. This for example includes organizing joint education and training of (future) professionals involved in tackling child abuse and neglect. Evidenced based knowledge shows that aspects to be addressed include competences like role awareness, communication skills and respect for (the contributions of) others. Governments and organisations working with children, parents and families need to be aware of this evidence and practice-based knowledge about integrated working as well as the possible bottlenecks. The bottlenecks encountered in integrated working include the lack of knowledge of professionals working with children, parents and families, the lack of financial resources, and the detrimental effects of current legislation or regulations on integrated work. When aware of these bottlenecks, governments as well as organisations need to change them to create conditions that were already found to be effective.

The Netherlands Youth Institute - The Netherlands

The Netherlands Youth Institute is the Dutch national institute for child and youth matters. Its main aim is an optimal development of children and young people by improving the quality and effectiveness of youth and parent services. As an expert centre, the Netherlands Youth Institute links scientific research to the practitioners' need for knowledge. It supports professionals in the field of children and youth through advice on policy, programmes and implementation, and by training professionals in evidence based methods.
www.nji.nl / info@nji.nl

Verwey-Jonker Institute - The Netherlands

The Verwey-Jonker Institute is a national, independent institute for applied research into social issues. The Institute has a longstanding reputation on policy-strategic and evaluative research on issues in the public and social/societal spheres. The outcomes are being used to improve governance and effectiveness of policies, organisations and governments. Research projects are financed by government bodies at different levels, including the European Commission. Some topics of research are: youth participation, citizenship, volunteering, socialisation, social integration, inclusion of ethnic minority youth and disadvantaged youth, and governance strategies for youth policy.
www.verwey-jonker.nl / info@verwey-jonker.nl

Orebro Regional Development Council - Sweden

The overall task of the Regional Development Council is to gather the county's resources in regional politics into an effective, democratically controlled organisation. The purpose and task of the organisation is to improve conditions for sustainable growth and to contribute to the best possible quality of life throughout the whole of Orebro County. The Regional Council's operations comprise mainly duties within industrial development, tourism, communications, infrastructure, the labour market, life-long learning, social welfare, environment and community development, international co-operation, culture and leisure/recreation.
www.regionorebro.se / regionorebro@regionorebro.se

The Family Child Youth Association - Hungary

The Family Child Youth Association (FCYA) since 1993 has been providing training and support to professionals in the area of child welfare and protection in Hungary, families and children in difficult situations and all those working with or are interested in children's rights, protection. The activities of FCYA include research, conduction of surveys, participating in EU co-funded projects and working together with universities conducting research. The Association organises training on different forms of mediation, child abuse, children's rights and it also provides training and professional supervision of future foster parents.
www.csagyi.hu / csagyi@csagyi.hu

CESIS, centre for studies on social interventions - Portugal

CESIS, centre for studies for social intervention - Portugal CESIS is a non profit independent organisation of researchers from a range of disciplinary backgrounds concerned to promote evidence-based, policy-relevant research at both national and European level. CESIS promotes and carries out research and action-research projects, evaluation, training, consultancy and expert advice. Among the areas of research and action-research that have secured a continuity of programmes and projects, giving rise to research reports, seminar papers, articles and books as well as pedagogical tools, the following are worth mentioning: children and young people, poverty and social exclusion, ageing and older people, migrants and ethnic minorities, work and labour, housing, homelessness, gender equality, human rights, and social policies.
www.cesis.org / cesis.geral@cesis.org

The German Youth Institute - Germany

The German Youth Institute (Deutsches Jugendinstitut e.V.) is Germany's largest non-university research institute devoted to the study of children, youth, and families. The Institute is mainly funded by the Federal Government and Germany's Laender. Additional funds come from the European Commission and national and international foundations. The German Youth Institute employs a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research strategies and methods such as continuous social monitoring of changing living conditions and studies on specific socio-political questions. Based on its research results, the Institute provides expertise and data bases for policy makers and practitioners at the European, federal, regional, and local level.
www.dji.de / info@dji.de



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For more information please contact:

Netherlands Youth Institute (Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, NJi)

The Netherlands Youth Institute is the Dutch national institute for child and youth matters. Its main aim is an optimal development of children and young people by improving the quality and effectiveness of youth and parent services. As an expert centre, the Netherlands Youth Institute links scientific research to the practitioners' need for knowledge. It supports professionals in the field of children and youth through advice on policy, programmes and implementation, and by training professionals in evidence based methods.

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